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## The Healing Garden Institute (HGI): Promoting an integrated approach to disease management for vulnerable inner-city communities of Worcester, MA

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*The Healing Garden Institute*

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# The Healing Garden Institute (HGI):

Promoting an integrated approach to disease management for vulnerable inner-city communities of Worcester, MA

Thidi Tshiguvho, Ph.D., Co-Director HGI | Contact: [hgiworchester@gmail.com](mailto:hgiworchester@gmail.com) | <http://www.worcesterroots.org/projects-and-programs/healing-garden-institute/>

## Background

The Healing Garden Institute (HGI) is a project of Worcester Roots Project (WRP), whose goal is to empower individuals and communities to adopt integrated and holistic approaches to health, through education, action and research. The HGI has three components: the Healing Garden, Community Education Center, and the Research Institute.

## Healing Garden

The healing garden was designed to promote the use of medicinal foods (vegetables, herbs and medicinal plants) to prevent and manage disease, as well as to promote overall wellbeing. Worcester's inner-city residents suffer disproportionately from chronic diseases, of which diabetes, hypertension and obesity are most prevalent. For such communities, chronic disease management through dietary and lifestyle changes is challenging due to their burdening daily life struggles. The Healing Garden strives to improve community access to organic and medicinal foods by promoting year-round indoor and outdoor gardening of medicinal herbs and vegetables for everyday use and chronic disease management.

The outdoor garden is located on King Street in Worcester, MA, directly behind Stone Soup Community Resource Center. The garden serves as a demonstration of low budget gardening methods that suits the limited space often found in low-income, inner city rental neighborhoods. The garden team demonstrates how porches, windows, fences, and plant pots can be used to provide year-round space for herbs and produce. The team also plans to demonstrate vertical gardening methods. The garden offers free soil testing for lead and other soil contaminants often found in historically industrial cities. The garden team identifies commonly used medicinal herbs and plants, and get experts to demonstrate how to cultivate and prepare them.



Healing garden produce.

## Community Education Center

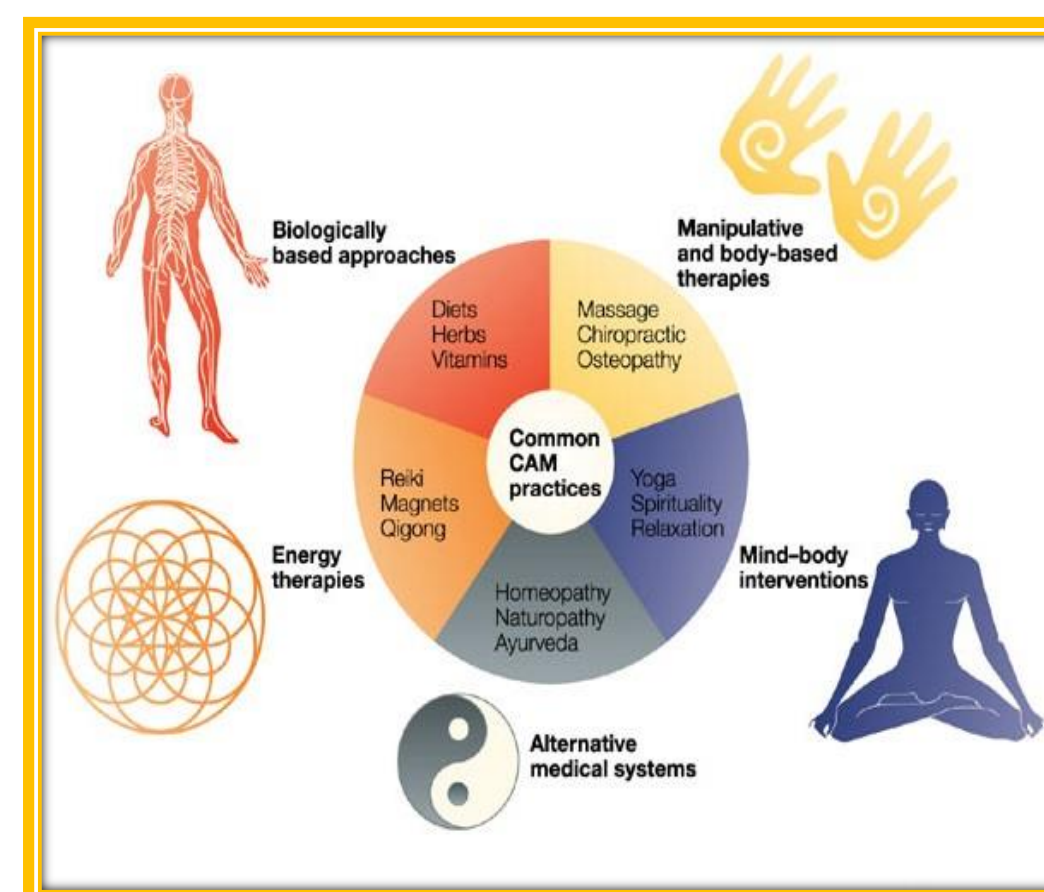
HGI hosts social gatherings, health education workshops, and skill-based workshops (gardening, cooking sessions, herb preparations). Participants also learn about different treatment options for diseases, and exchange experiences with other community members suffering from similar conditions.



Seth Mansur conducting a community training on mushroom cultivation.



## Research Institute



An integrated approach to wellbeing.

<http://s3.amazonaws.com/coldsore/list-of-common-alternative-therapies.html>

HGI believes in an integrated, holistic and cross-cultural approach to health. HGI does not consider using herbs as a substitute to pharmaceutical medications, but instead aims to objectively share knowledge on the available spectrum of treatment options for different diseases.

To that end, the research institute facilitates discussions among researchers, natural medicine practitioners, and community elders about different treatments of disease, the science behind the use of medicinal plants, and recent developments in the field. The institute will also produce a monthly online newsletter.

The garden on King Street is connected to the Stone Soup Aquaponics Greenhouse, whereby year-round planting techniques are scientifically tested.

We are currently developing capacity to conduct botanical experimentation and phytochemical analysis of medicinal plants, in collaboration with local and international institutions.

## About the Author



Thidi Tshiguvho is a founding co-director of HGI. Her current interests are in the areas of Health Disparity, Community-based Research, Integrative Medicine, and Phytochemical Analysis of Medicinal plants. Her other areas of expertise include Participatory Research Methods, and Statistical Data Analysis.

Dr. Tshiguvho has worked as a professor of Biological Sciences (in South Africa), and Geography at Worcester State University and Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI).

## How You Can Help!

We need volunteers to help with garden design, working the garden in the summer, facilitating/presenting at health education sessions, participating in research, and more.

Contact us to help you set-up your indoor-outdoor garden.

**Sign up now!**

**Healing Garden Institute  
4 King Street  
Worcester, MA 01610**